

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND
CONTROLLED STRIP
AT
PURELY PLANTS, MAIN ROAD,
MIDDLETON CHENEY. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
NGR SP 4941 4167**

On behalf of

Purely Plants Ltd

APRIL 2012

REPORT FOR Purely Plants Ltd
Main Road
Middleton Cheney
Banbury
Oxfordshire OX17 2PW.

PREPARED BY Adrian M. Chadwick

ILLUSTRATION BY Eoin Fitzsimons

FIELDWORK 6th, 23rd and 26th March 2012
Adrian M. Chadwick
David Gilbert
Gwilym Williams

REPORT ISSUED 16th April 2012

ENQUIRES TO John Moore Heritage Services
Hill View
Woodperry Road
Beckley
Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ

Tel/Fax 01865 358300
Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk

Site Code MCMR 12
JMHS Project No: 2591
Archive Location The archive is currently held at JMHS and will be so until a suitable location in the county is identified for deposition.

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Summary</i>	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	3
3 STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	4
4 RESULTS	4
5 DISCUSSION	5
6 BIBLIOGRAPHY	5
FIGURES	
Figure 1 Site Location	2
Figure 2 View of machining taking place on the Site with the service trench visible in the foreground, looking east	5

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out a metal detector survey and a watching brief on ground works at Purely Plants, Main Road, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire on the 6th, 23rd and 26th March 2012, the latter during the removal of topsoil and the digging of service trenches for a new pet centre building. No archaeological deposits, features or finds were identified.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location

The groundwork took place on land (hereafter referred to as 'the Site') east of the Purely Plants Garden Centre on the southern side of Main Road, Middleton Cheney (NGR SP 4941 4167; Figure 1). Despite the garden centre having a Banbury, Oxfordshire postal address, the Site itself is actually situated within South Northamptonshire, and consists of a trapezoidal area of land bordered to the north by Main Road, to the east by Warkworth Road, to the south by grassed paddocks and to the west by the garden centre.

The Site is situated on ground at approximately 125 metres above Ordnance Datum (OD) that slopes towards the south, with the underlying geology consisting of Middle Lias silts and clays. The Site consisted of grass pasture. The development work involved the removal of topsoil and subsoil ground reduction to create a level area at the north of the Site, and the machine excavation of a narrow service trench connecting the new building to the existing garden centre.

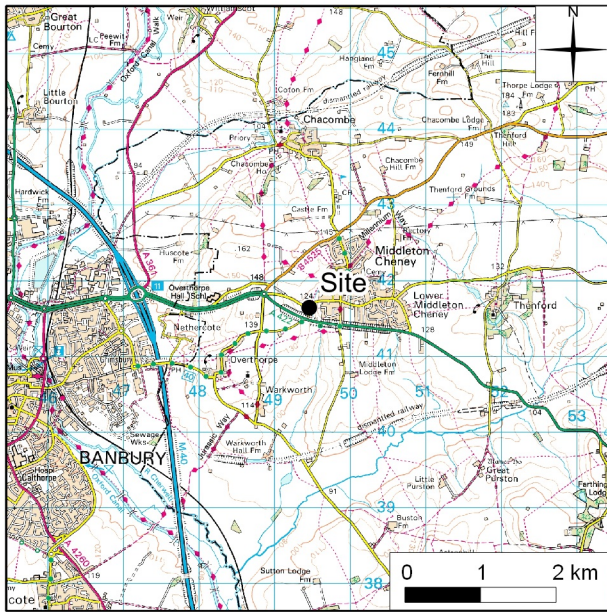
1.2 Planning Background

South Northamptonshire Council granted planning permission for the construction of a new all-weather pet training centre building on land adjacent to the Purely Plants Garden Centre. Due to the potential presence of below ground archaeological remains, a condition for an archaeological watching brief was attached to the permission on a recommendation of the Assistant Archaeological Advisor of Northamptonshire County Council who prepared a *Brief* for the archaeological work programme. The *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2591/01) was prepared in response to the Brief, and outlined the methodology by which the metal detector survey and archaeological watching brief was carried out.

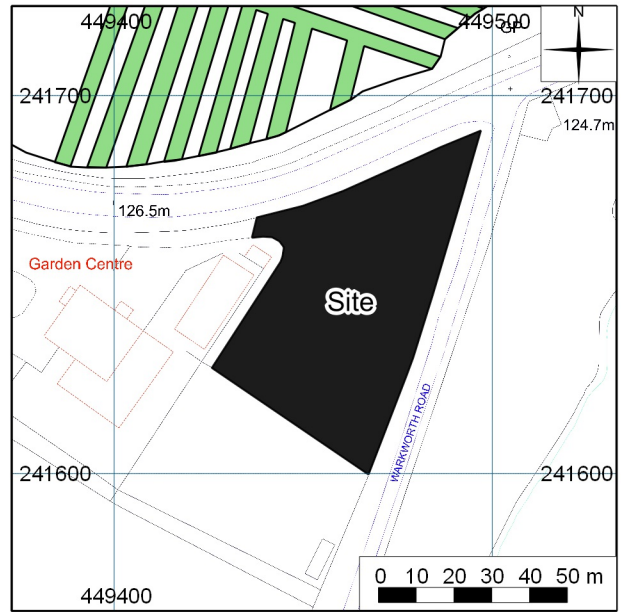
1.3 Archaeological Background

The Site is situated near the western edge of the village of Middleton Cheney, on the southern side of Main Street (NGR SP 6049 2891). The Site lies near known archaeological and historical assets, with aerial photographs recording a probable later prehistoric settlement of ditched enclosures *circa.* 500m to the north (ENN3254; Northants SMR 28), and there is also a possible prehistoric linear earthwork (SMR 612/0/1) roughly 500m to the south-west.

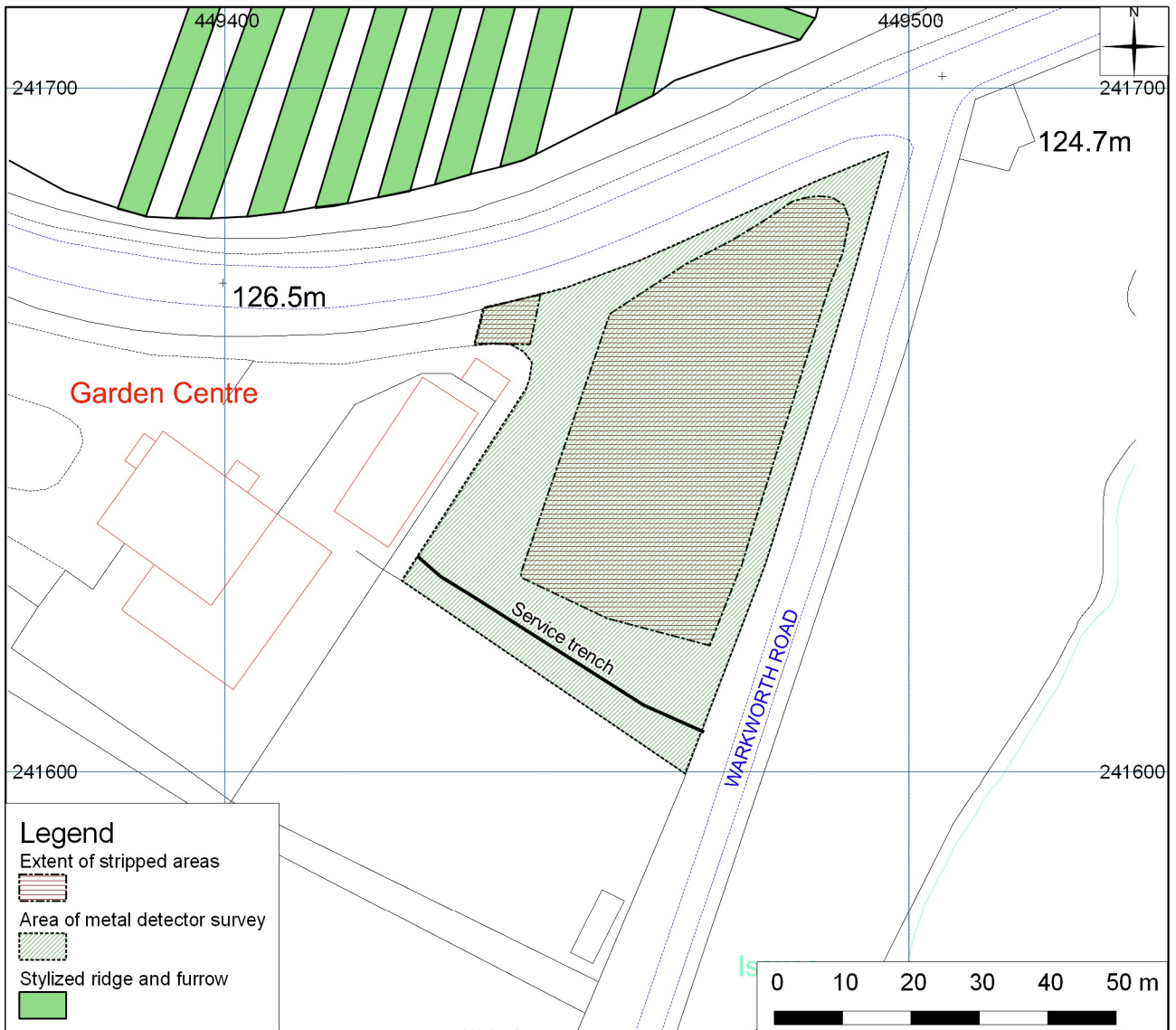
The medieval core of Middleton Cheney (SMR 6132) is *c.* 200m to the east with 12 Listed Buildings dating from the 17th century onwards, and the 14th century church of



© Crown Copyright 2008. All rights reserved. Licence number LI60037



Ordnance Survey (c) Crown Copyright 2012. All rights reserved. Licence number 100020449



Ordnance Survey (c) Crown Copyright 2012. All rights reserved. Licence number 100020449

Figure 1. Site location

All Saints (SMR 6132/1/1) 500m to the north-east. There is medieval or early post-medieval ridge and furrow in the fields to the north of the Site (SMR 6415/0/7, 6415/0/11), and this may also have been present within the development area in the past. A Civil War skirmish took place in 1643 at a location thought to be approximately 200m to the south-east (SMR 26/1, ENN3252). Metal detecting (SMR 26/1/0, ENN3253) by the Midland Archaeological Research Society recovered finds including five musket balls from this same general area. The 18th century toll road, now the A422, is just to the south of the Site (SMR 9277/1).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation indicated in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To undertaking a rapid metal detector survey, locate and recover any metal artefacts from across the area to be disturbed by the proposed development;
- to make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains;
- to record any artefacts relating to the battle of 1643;
- to record any evidence of activity relating to the prehistoric cropmarks in the area;
- to record any evidence of activity relating to the medieval activity in the area.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

For the rapid metal detecting survey, the area of the proposed development was to be surveyed prior to the start of any ground works, and the locations of finds of 17th century date were to be recorded in three dimensions. Both ferrous and non-ferrous objects were to be recovered. The recovery of any archaeological objects during the field survey would be restricted to the plough soil, but in the event that an object or group of objects was located below plough soil depth, these would be left *in situ* whilst arrangements were made for their recovery under controlled excavation conditions. Items of no archaeological significance were to be discarded, and when the date and function of an object was unknown or uncertain it was to be retained for examination by finds staff and/or relevant specialists.

An archaeologist would be present on Site during the course of any groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains, including any reduction in ground level, excavations for services and any additional intrusive works.

Any archaeological deposits and features revealed would be cleaned by hand and planned before being excavated and recorded at an appropriate level. Archaeological features or other archaeological remains such as a concentration of artefacts would

have written, drawn and photographic records made of them. Where archaeological features were exposed during any reduction in ground level but were otherwise unaffected, these would only be recorded through written descriptions and plans, whilst any surface finds would be retained. Where archaeological features or remains would be impacted by any groundwork, they would be sample excavated. Any variations to this would be agreed with the Assistant Archaeological Advisor of Northamptonshire County Council who would be consulted for advice.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work would be carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

3.2 Methodology

The rapid metal detector survey took place on the 6th March 2012 using a Minelab X-Terra 30 detector along transects 2m apart, set out with a handheld GPS unit and measuring tapes. These transects were broadly parallel to the presumed layout of the ridge and furrow. An archaeologist monitored all the invasive groundwork; and all resulting surfaces were then inspected for any significant archaeological features.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings produced where appropriate.

4 RESULTS

The metal detector survey did not recover any objects likely to have been associated with the Civil War battle. The ferrous objects comprised 20 relatively modern nails, six hand-made nails, a relatively modern horseshoe, and five short-lengths of wire, three semi-intact enamelled dinner plates and numerous fragments of corrugated sheet metal. These were all noted but not retained. Non-ferrous objects consisted of a bayonet-cap for a light bulb, a short length of modern copper water pipe, part of a petrol cap from a car and a drinks bottle cap, which were again all noted but not retained.

An archaeologist was present on Site on the 23rd and the 26th March 2012 to monitor topsoil removal and the machine-excavated service trench. This work was undertaken using a large tracked Volvo EC160 16 tonne 360-degree mini-digger with a 1.50m toothless ditching bucket mounted on a Steelwrist tiltrotator.

No ridge and furrow or other archaeological features or deposits were identified. The friable, dark reddish brown sandy silty loam topsoil was generally 0.20-0.35m thick, and contained modern brick and tile fragments, and sherds of 19th century and early 20th century porcelain, pottery and glass vessels, none of which were retained. It lay above natural subsoil consisting of orange brown clayey silts. Towards the north-western corner of the Site, a sub-circular feature at least 5m across and filled with light grey brown clay also contained 19th century broken bottles, 20th century iron oil and paint tins, leather shoes and scraps, and other refuse. This feature may have been a pond or small natural depression subsequently used as a rubbish dump.



Figure 2. View of machining taking place on the Site with the service trench visible in the foreground, looking east. Note the significant break in slope.

5 DISCUSSION

No archaeological features or deposits were recorded during the watching brief, and no post-medieval artefacts were identified during this work and the metal detector survey. The only artefacts identified were 19th or 20th century in date, mostly as unstratified topsoil finds, but also in the backfilled hollow or pond. No ridge and furrow features were noted, and only some slight terracing was identified.

Although it is possible that ridge and furrow had originally been present on the upper northern part of the Site, no traces of any furrows were visible underneath the relatively shallow topsoil present there. Towards the south of the Site a pronounced east-west break in slope or terrace was visible, and if any ridge and furrow had ever been present below this feature it may well have been truncated.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Institute for Archaeologists 2008. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*. Reading: IfA.

John Moore Heritage Services 2011. *Written Scheme of Investigation: Purely Plants*. Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire. JMHS 2591/01.